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In re the Application of

Hideaki YAMANAKA et al.

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CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

The benefit of the filing dates of the following prior foreign applications filed in the following foreign country is hereby requested for the above-identified patent application and the priority provided in 35 U.S.C. §119 is hereby claimed: Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-359200 filed November 27, 2000;

Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-054254 filed February 28, 2001 and Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-078630 filed March 19, 2001.

In support of this claim, certified copies of said original foreign applications:

X are filed herewith.	X
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It is requested that the file of this application be marked to indicate that the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §119 have been fulfilled and that the Patent and Trademark Office kindly acknowledge receipt of these documents.

Respectfully submitted,

Registration No. 27,075

Thomas J. Pardini Registration No. 30,411

JAO:TJP/kaf

Date: December 10, 2001

OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC P.O. Box 19928 Alexandria, Virginia 22320 Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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【発明者】

【住所又は居所】 大阪府茨木市丑寅一丁目1番88号 日立マクセル株式

会社内

【氏名】

神田 哲典

【発明者】

【住所又は居所】 大阪府茨木市丑寅一丁目1番88号 日立マクセル株式

会社内

【氏名】

山中 英明

【発明者】

【住所又は居所】

大阪府茨木市丑寅一丁目1番88号 日立マクセル株式

会社内

【氏名】

稲葉 信幸

【発明者】

【住所又は居所】

大阪府茨木市丑寅一丁目1番88号 日立マクセル株式

会社内

【氏名】

藤田 塩地

【発明者】

【住所又は居所】

大阪府茨木市丑寅一丁目1番88号 日立マクセル株式

会社内

【氏名】

松沼 悟

【特許出願人】

【識別番号】

000005810

【氏名又は名称】 日立マクセル株式会社



【代理人】

【識別番号】

100099793

【弁理士】

【氏名又は名称】

川北 喜十郎

【電話番号】

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【プルーフの要否】



【書類名】 明細書

【発明の名称】 磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 磁気記録媒体において、

下地層と、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と、

上記下地層と上記記録層との間で下地層に接して存在し、強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の保磁力を増大させる保磁力エンハンス層と、

上記記録層と上記保磁力エンハンス層との間に存在する非磁性層とを含み、

上記保磁力エンハンス層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔との差が、上記記録層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔との差よりも小さいことを特徴とする磁気記録媒体。

【請求項2】 上記記録層の配向面における格子間隔を a_1 、上記保磁力エンハンス層の配向面における格子間隔を a_2 、上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔を a_3 とし、ミスマッチ Δ 1及び Δ 2を、それぞれ、

$$\Delta 1 = | (a_1 - a_3) / a_3 | \times 100$$

$$\Delta 2 = | (a_2 - a_3) / a_3 | \times 100$$

と定義するとき、

 $\Delta 1 > \Delta 2$

の関係を満たすことを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項3】 更に、

 $\Delta 2 < \Delta 1 < 10.25$

且つ

 $(5/10.25) < \Delta 1/\Delta 2 < 1$

の関係を満たすことを特徴とする請求項2に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項4】 上記保磁力エンハンス層は、記録層と同じ結晶構造を有することを特徴とする請求項1~3のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項5】 上記保磁力エンハンス層に含まれる磁性元素の割合が、上記 記録層に含まれる磁性元素の割合よりも大きいことを特徴とする請求項1~4の



いずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項6】 上記保磁力エンハンス層の飽和磁化をMs1、上記記録層の 飽和磁化をMs2としたとき、Ms1>Ms2の関係を満たすことを特徴とする 請求項1~5のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項7】 上記保磁力エンハンス層が、Co、Ni、Fe及びCoNi Fe合金からなる群から選ばれた一種から形成されていることを特徴とする請求 項1~6のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項8】 上記保磁力エンハンス層が、Co、NiまたはFeと遷移金属とを含む合金から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1~6のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項9】 上記非磁性層が、Ruから形成されていることを特徴とする 請求項1~8のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項10】 更に、基板を備え、基板上に上記下地層を備えることを特徴とする請求項1~9のいずれかに一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項11】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と、

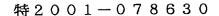
強磁性材料から形成され、上記記録層の保磁力を増加するための保磁力エンハンス層と、

上記記録層と上記保磁力エンハンス層との間に存在する非磁性層とを含む磁気 記録媒体。

【請求項12】 上記保磁力エンハンス層がまた、上記記録層の磁化を安定 化させる保磁力エンハンス層として機能することを特徴とする請求項11に記載 の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項13】 上記磁気記録媒体の外部磁界に対する磁化曲線が、ヒステリシスループを示し、磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率が極大を示す点が、正の外部磁界の領域に存在し、且つ磁化曲線から求めた交換結合磁界が1kOe以上であることを特徴とする請求項11または12に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項14】 上記記録層及び保磁力エンハンス層がCo、NiまたはF





e を含み、且つ保磁力エンハンス層に含まれる磁性元素の割合が記録層に含まれる磁性元素の割合よりも大きいことを特徴とする請求項11~13のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項15】 上記記録層が面内方向の磁化を有する請求項1または11 に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項16】 請求項1または11に記載の磁気記録媒体と上記磁気記録 媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気 ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置とを含む磁気記録装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】

本発明は、磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置に関し、特に、熱安定性に優れ、高密度記録に好適な面内磁気記録媒体及びその面内磁気記録媒体を装着した磁気記録装置に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】

近年の高度情報化社会の進展に伴い、文字情報のみならず音声及び画像情報を 高速に処理することができるマルチメディアが普及してきている。マルチメディ アの一つとして、コンピュータ等に装着される磁気記録装置が知られている。現 在、この磁気記録装置に用いられる磁気記録媒体の記録密度を向上させつつ、小 型化する方向に開発が進められている。

[0003]

典型的な磁気記録装置は、複数の磁気ディスクをスピンドル上に回転可能に装着している。各磁気ディスクは、基板とその上に形成された磁性膜から構成されており、情報の記録は、特定の磁化方向を有する磁区を磁性膜中に形成することにより行われる。

[0004]

このような磁気記録装置の高密度記録化を実現するためには、磁性膜を構成する磁性結晶粒の粒径を微小化させ、且つ、各粒子間の磁気的相互作用を低減させ



ることが要求される。しかしながら、結晶粒の微小化と各粒子間の磁気的相互作用の低減は、記録した磁化の熱安定性を低下させるという問題がある。

[0005]

また、高密度記録化のために磁性層の結晶粒を微小化して磁性層に微小な記録磁区を形成すると、記録磁区の磁極の間隔が短くなるために反磁界が増大し、かかる反磁界が磁性層に形成した記録磁区の磁化を反転させるという問題が生じる。かかる反磁界の影響を低減するには、磁性膜の膜厚を薄くすることが必要である。しかしながら、磁性層の膜厚が薄くなるとその保磁力が低下するため、記録磁区が熱ゆらぎ等により不安定になるという問題が生じる。そこで、磁気記録媒体の高密度記録を実現するためには、磁性層の保磁力を高めることが要求されている。

[0006]

近年、熱安定性を高める手法には記録層の下地層として、軟磁性のいわゆるキーパー層を設ける方法、記録層の磁化と逆方向の磁化を有する層を設ける方法が知られている。後者の方法の一つとして、図5に示した磁気ディスクのCoCrPtB記録層とCoCrPtB磁化安定化層の間にRu薄膜を形成して記録層と磁化安定化層との間で磁気的結合を起こさせることにより、熱安定性の向上を実現させる技術が、E.N. Abarra et al.の文献に発表されている(E.N. Abarra et al. TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR-2000-34(2000-10))。この文献には、図5に示した磁気ディスク構造において、磁気結合層としてRuを用い、その膜厚を0.5~1nm程度にしたときに、記録層と磁化安定化層の間に反強磁性的な交換結合が働くことが示されている。かかる磁気ディスクは、記録層と磁化安定化層の磁化は互いに反平行に並んでいるため、記録層の磁化は磁化安定化層により安定化され、且つ、実効的な磁化反転体積は増大しているので、熱安定性に優れている。

[0007]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】

しかしながら、磁気記録装置の更なる高記録密度化を実現するために、上記文献に開示された磁気ディスクよりも、記録層の保磁力が高く、熱安定性がより一



層向上されている磁気ディスクが要望されている。

[0008]

本発明の第1の目的は、高密度磁気記録に適した磁気記録媒体及びそれを装着 した磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0009]

本発明の第2の目的は、熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体、特に面内磁気記録媒体及びそれを備えた磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0010]

本発明の第3の目的は、記録層の保磁力が高められた磁気記録媒体を提供することにある。

[0011]

【課題を解決するための手段】

本発明の第1の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体において、

下地層と、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と、

上記下地層と上記記録層との間で下地層に接して存在し、強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の保磁力を増大させる保磁力エンハンス層と、

上記記録層と上記保磁力エンハンス層との間に存在する非磁性層とを含み、

上記保磁力エンハンス層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔との差が、上記記録層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔と上記下地層の配向面における格子間隔との差よりも小さいことを特徴とする磁気記録媒体が提供される。

[0012]

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、下地層と記録層との間に強磁性材料から形成される 保磁力エンハンス層を形成して、保磁力エンハンス層と下地層との格子間隔との 差を、記録層と下地層との格子間隔の差よりも小さくなるように制御している。 かかる保磁力エンハンス層により、下地層と記録層との間の格子歪が緩和され、 記録層の結晶配向性が向上するので、記録層の保磁力を増大することができる。 かかる磁気記録媒体は、図5に示した従来型構造を有する面内磁気記録媒体の磁 化安定化層と同様に、強磁性材料から形成されているために、記録層の磁化を安定化させることができる。すなわち、保磁力エンハンス層は、下地層と記録層との間の格子歪すなわち格子間隔のずれを緩和するように作用するシード層としての機能に加え、記録層の磁化を安定化させる機能を有している。したがって、本発明の磁気記録媒体は、記録層に形成された微小な磁区を安定に保持することができるので、高密度記録を実用化することができる。本発明において、「格子間隔」とは、配向面における格子間隔を意味するものとする。

[0013]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において、記録層の配向面における格子間隔を a_1 、保磁力エンハンス層の格子間隔を a_2 、下地層の格子間隔を a_3 とし、記録層と下地層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチ Δ 1及び保磁力エンハンス層と下地層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチ Δ 2を次式

Δi=|(a_i-a₃)/a₃|×100(iは1または2)・・・(1)で定義したときにΔ1>Δ2の関係を満たすことが好ましい。ただし、(1)式において、記号||は絶対値を示す。一般に、格子間隔のミスマッチは、複数の層が成長して積層された積層体の各層の界面の格子間隔の差に起因する。記録層は、保磁力エンハンス層上から非磁性層を介して成長することから、記録層の配向性は、記録層と保磁力エンハンス層との格子間隔の差に依存する。一方、保磁力エンハンス層の配向性は、保磁力エンハンス層と下地層との格子間隔の差に依存する。上記のように、保磁力エンハンス層と下地層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチΔ1よりも小さくすって、記録層と下地層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチΔ1よりも小さくすることにより、保磁力エンハンス層を記録層のシード層として機能させ、下地層から記録層を所望の配向で層成長させることがきる。

[0014]

下地層と記録層との格子整合性をより一層高めるためには、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチ、及び、記録層と下地層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチをそれぞれ 5 %以内に低減することが望ましく、そのためには、上記ミスマッチ Δ 1 及び Δ 2 は、 Δ 2 < Δ 1 <1 0. 2 5、及び、(5/10.25) < Δ 2 / Δ 1 <1 の関係を同時に満足することが好ましい。 Δ 2 / Δ 1

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の値を、かかる範囲にすれば、下地層と記録層との間に格子の歪があるときに、 保磁力エンハンス層でその格子の歪を効果的に緩和して、下地層上から保磁力エ ンハンス層を介して、所望の格子間隔を有する記録層を形成することができる。 これにより、記録層の保磁力をより一層増大させることができる。

[0015]

本発明において、保磁力エンハンス層は、記録層の磁化容易軸を面内方向に配向制御する必要があるために、記録層と同じ結晶構造を有することが理想的である。面内記録方式の磁気記録媒体では、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間に交換結合が働く場合、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層の磁化が平行のときに最も磁気異方性エネルギーが低くなり、それらの磁化の安定性が最も良い状態となる。

[0016]

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、保磁力エンハンス層の飽和磁化をMs1、記録層の飽和磁化をMs2としたときに、Ms1>Ms2の関係を満たすことが望ましい。そのためには、保磁力エンハンス層に含まれる磁性元素の割合が、記録層に含まれる磁性元素の割合よりも大きくなるように、保磁力エンハンス層を形成することが望ましい。これにより、記録層と保磁力エンハンス層との間の交換結合力を更に増大させることができる。図5に示した従来型媒体の場合、記録層と磁化安定化層は同じ材料で構成されており、組成及び結晶構造もまた同一である。記録層と磁化安定化層はRu層を介して交換結合しており、この交換結合は、記録層と磁化安定化層中のCo原子同士がRu原子を介して電子軌道が結合していることに基づくと考えられる。本発明では、保磁力エンハンス層中の磁性元素の割合を記録層中の磁性元素の割合よりも高めて、交換結合に寄与する磁性元素を増加させているために、記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の交換結合力は、図5に示した従来型媒体の記録層と磁化安定化層の交換結合力よりも増加している。そのため、図5に示した従来型媒体よりも熱安定性を高めることができる。

[0017]

保磁力エンハンス層は、例えば、Co、NiもしくはFeを含む合金から形成され得る。または、Co、NiまたはFeと、遷移金属、特に、Pt、Au、Ag、Cu、Pdなどの貴金属とを含む合金から形成され得る。それらの元素また

は合金は、非磁性層を介して電子的に結合して交換結合磁界を増大する働きがある。

[0018]

本発明においては、保磁力エンハンス層に用いる材料及び膜厚を調整することにより、記録層の保磁力及び記録層と保磁力エンハンス層との間の交換結合力を制御することができる。図3に示すように、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚が厚くなると記録層の保磁力が増大し、膜厚を薄くすると記録層と保磁力エンハンス層との間の交換結合力が増大する傾向がある。それゆえ、いずれの特性を重視するかに従って膜厚を適宜選択し得る。これまでの実験結果からすれば、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚が9.0nmを超えると、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間の交換結合が、反強磁性的な交換結合を示さなくなる場合があることがわかっている。一方、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚が1.0nm以上であれば、保磁力エンハンス層とその上に形成される記録層との間の格子整合性を維持して記録層の保磁力を十分に増大できることがわかっている。それゆえ、記録層の保磁力及び記録層と保磁力エンハンス層との間の交換結合力の双方をバランス良く増大させるには、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚は、1.0nm~9.0nmが好ましい。

[0019]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において、非磁性層は、Ruから形成され得るが、これに限らず、Rh、Ir、Hf、Cu、Cr、Ag、Au、Re、Mo、Nb、W、Ta、Vなどの遷移金属、CoCrRuのようなCoCr系の非磁性合金を用い得る。交換結合を一層高めるためにはRuが望ましい。なお、本発明において、この非磁性層は記録層と保磁力エンハンス層とを磁気的に結合する働きを有するので磁気結合層とも呼ぶ。

[0020]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において記録層は結晶質であって、該結晶質相がコバルト(Co)を主体とした合金にしてよい。このCo合金においては、CoにCr、Pt、Ta、Nb、Ti、Si、B、P、Pd、V、Tb、Gd、Sm、Nd、Dy、Ho、若しくはEu、又はそれらの組み合わせを含み得る。

[0021]

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ここで、記録層にクロム(Cr)を含むと、Coを主体とした結晶粒子(磁性粒子)の粒界近傍又は粒界部にCrの偏析部分を形成することができる。記録層中に更にTa、Nb、Ti、B若しくはP、又はそれらの元素の組み合わせを含むと、Crの偏析が促進される。この偏析によって、磁性粒子間の磁気的相互作用が低減でき、磁化反転単位を構成する磁性粒子数を減らすことができる。従って、CoCr合金に上記添加物を含む記録層に本発明の保磁力エンハンス層を組み合わせて用いることで、微小な磁化反転単位でありながら熱揺らぎに強い磁気記録媒体をもたらすことができる。また、かかる記録層は、結晶粒界に偏析したCrリッチの非磁性領域により結晶粒間の磁気的な結合が絶たれるので、記録遷移領域に起因したノイズを抑えることもできる。

[0022]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において、下地層は、例えば、Cr若しくはNi、又は、Cr合金若しくはNi合金から形成し得る。Cr合金又はNi合金は、母元素以外にCr、Ti、Ta、V、Ru、W、Mo、Nb、Ni、ZrまたはAlを含み得る。下地層は、記録層の結晶配向性や格子間隔を制御する目的で使用される。下地層は、単層または複数層で用いることも可能である。

[0023]

本発明の磁気記録媒体は更に基板を備え得る。この場合、基板上に下地層が形成される。基板はガラス、ポリカーボネートなどのプラスチックから形成し得る

[0024]

本発明の第2の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と、

強磁性材料から形成され、上記記録層の保磁力を増加するための保磁力エンハンス層と、

上記記録層と上記保磁力エンハンス層との間に存在する非磁性層とを含む磁気 記録媒体が提供される。

[0025]

本発明の第2の態様の磁気記録媒体は、保磁力エンハンス層により記録層の保

磁力を、記録層を単層で構成した場合よりも増大させている。そのため、記録層に高密度に情報を記録することができるとともに、記録した情報の熱安定性に優れている。また、保磁力エンハンス層は、強磁性材料から形成されているので非磁性層を介して記録層との間で交換結合力が作用する。それゆえ、保磁力エンハンス層は記録層の磁化を安定化する働きも有する。記録層の保磁力を増大させるためには、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との格子間隔のミスマッチを低減させることが望ましい。保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との格子間隔のミスマッチを低減させるために、例えば、下地層を設けることができる。下地層は、保磁力エンハンス層が下地層と記録層との間に位置するように媒体内で位置付けられる。ここで、下地層は、記録層の配向性を制御するとともに、高保磁力が得られるような記録層の結晶構造に近い構造を有することが好ましい。また、記録層の保磁力を増大させるために、保磁力エンハンス層の結晶粒子径を制御してもよい。

[0026]

かかる磁気記録媒体は、例えば、図4に示すような磁化曲線で表されるヒステリシスループで表される磁気特性を有する。このヒステリシスループでは、磁気記録媒体の磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在する。磁気記録媒体の磁化が飽和しているときには、記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化がともに平行である。外部磁界が低下して磁化の変化率が極大となる領域で、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間で働く交換結合力のために、保磁力エンハンス層の磁化が反転する。残留磁化状態において、かかる交換結合力のために記録層の磁化の熱安定性は向上する。また、磁化の変化率が極大となる領域では、図4に示すようなマイナーヒステリシスループが観測され得る。マイナーヒステリシスループの中心点から求めた交換結合磁界Hexは、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間の交換結合力が増大するとともに増大するため、交換結合磁界が大きいほど熱安定性が増すことを示す。交換結合磁界Hexは、1kOe以上、好ましくは1.5kOe以上であり、図5に示した従来型の磁気記録媒体に比べて著しく大きく、それゆえ、本発明の磁気記録媒体は熱安定性に優れることがわかる。

[0027]

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このような大きな交換結合磁界H_{ex}を生じさせるには、例えば、保磁力エンハンス層に含まれる磁性元素の割合が、記録層に含まれる磁性元素の割合よりも大きくなるように、保磁力エンハンス層を形成することが望ましい。

[0028]

本発明の第3の態様に従えば、本発明の第1または第2の態様に従う磁気記録 媒体と、

上記磁気記録媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと、

上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置とを備える磁気記録装置が提供される。

[0029]

本発明に従う磁気記録装置は、高密度記録可能で熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体を装着しているために、大記憶容量でかつ長時間に渡る記録安定性に優れる。

[0030]

【発明の実施の形態】

以下に、本発明の磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置を実施例及び比較例を用いて 具体的に説明する。ただし、本発明はこれらの実施例に限定されない。

[0031]

【実施例1】

本発明に従う磁気記録媒体の典型例を図1の断面図に示す。ガラス基板20上に、第1下地層2、第2下地層4、保磁力エンハンス層6、磁気結合層8、記録層12及び保護層14を備える。各層は以下のようにDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。

[0032]

直径2.5inch(6.25cm)のガラス基板20上に、第1金属下地層2として、NiA1膜をDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。ターゲットには原子比でNi:A1=50:50のNiA1合金を用いた。NiA1膜の膜厚は50nmであった。スパッタ時のArガス圧は0.3Pa、投入電力は0.5kWであった。基板は、スパッタ開始前に、スパッタ室を1×10⁻⁵Pa以下に減圧した後に340℃に加熱した。この条件下

での成膜速度は約3nm/秒であった。

[0033]

第2金属下地層4として、CrMo膜を第1金属下地層2上に膜厚20nmで 形成した。ターゲットにはMo:27原子%のCrMo合金を用いた。成膜条件 は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0034]

次いで、保磁力エンハンス層6としてCoPt膜を第2金属下地層4上に膜厚 2nmで形成した。ターゲットには、Pt:17原子%のCoPt合金を用いた 。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0035]

次いで、磁気結合層 8 として、R u 膜を保磁力エンハンス層 6 上に膜厚 0.8 n m で形成した。ターゲットにはR u を用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件は、投入電力は 1 0 0 W とし、基板とターゲット間の間隔を長くした以外は、第 1 金属下地層 2 の場合と同様にした。

[0036]

記録層10として、面内方向の磁化を有するCoCrPtB膜を磁気結合層8上に膜厚18nmで形成した。ターゲットには Co_{64} Cr_{20} Pt_{12} B_4 合金を用いた。成膜条件は、保磁力エンハンス層6 と同様にした。

[0037]

最後に、CoCrPtB記録層12上に、保護膜としてのカーボン層を膜厚5 nmで形成した。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様であった。こうして図1に示した構造の磁気ディスク10を製造した。

[0038]

【比較例1】

比較例として、図1の保磁力エンハンス層6に記録層10と同組成のCoCr PtBを成膜した。保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚は4.5 nm、記録層の膜厚は実 施例1の記録層と同じ18 nmの膜厚で磁気ディスクを製造した。

[0039]

[磁化曲線の評価]

実施例1で製造した磁気ディスクの磁化測定を以下のようにして行った。VSM (Vibrating Sample Magnetometer)により磁界を印加して外部磁界に対する磁化曲線を観測した。得られた結果を図2に示す。図2のヒステリシスループからわかるように、正方向の外部磁界を印加して磁化を飽和させた後、外部磁界を低下させていくと、外部磁界がゼロになる前に、ある磁界で磁化が急激に減少する領域がある。これは記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の間に働く交換結合の影響によって引き起こされる現象であり、磁気記録媒体の磁化が飽和しているときは、記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化はともに平行であるが、外部磁界が低下して、保磁力エンハンス層の磁化が反転して記録層の磁化方向と反平行になるために生じる。

[0040]

ここで、図2に示したヒステリシスループから記録層の保磁力を求めた。以下に、保磁力の求め方について説明する。図2に示したヒステリシスループは、磁気記録媒体のヒステリシスループであり、ヒステリシスループ上の磁化の値は、磁性材料からそれぞれ構成された記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化の和を示している。一方、記録層の保磁力は、通常、記録層の磁化のみが描くヒステリシスループにおいて記録層の磁化の大きさがゼロになったときの外部磁界の大きさで定義される。そこで、図2に示したヒステリシスループから、以下のようにして記録層の保磁力を見積もった。図2に示したヒステリシスループにおいては、記録層の磁化がゼロのときは保磁力エンハンス層の磁化のみが検出されているはずであり、この場合の保磁力エンハンス層の磁化の大きさをMstaとすれば、図2のヒステリシスループにおいてーMstaの磁化が得られるときの外部磁界の大きさが、記録層の磁化がゼロのときの外部磁界、すなわち記録層の保磁力を示すことになる。そして、Msta以のヒステリシスループから次のようにして見積もることができる。

[0041]

図2に示したヒステリシスループでは、前述したように、正方向の外部磁界を 印加して磁化を飽和させた後、外部磁界を低下させていくと、図2に示すように 、ループ上のA点とB点との間で磁化が急激に減少している。このA点とB点と の間の磁化の急激な減少は、記録層の磁化の方向は変化せずに保磁力エンハンス層の磁化のみが反転したことによる。ループ上のA点では記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化の向きは平行であり、A点での磁化は記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化の和を表す。一方、B点ではそれの層の磁化の向きが反平行となるので、B点での磁化は記録層と保磁力エンハンス層の磁化の差を表す。したがって、前述の保磁力エンハンス層の磁化M_{Sta}は、ループ上のA点における磁化の値とB点における磁化の値との差の半分として見積もることができる。

[0042]

かかる方法により、図2のヒステリシスループから記録層の保磁力を求めたところ、約4.5kOeであった。一方、比較例で作製した磁気ディスクの記録層についても同様の方法により保磁力を求めたところ、記録層の保磁力は約3.5kOeであった。つまり、実施例1の磁気記録媒体の記録層は、比較例1の磁気記録媒体の記録層よりも、保磁力が約30%増加した。

[0043]

第2下地層4と記録層10の配向関係は、CrMo(211) [110] // CoCrPtB(10・0) [0001] である。第2下地層4であるCrMo [110] の格子間隔は4.182Å、実施例1で保磁力エンハンス層6として 用いられたCoPtの[0001] の格子間隔は4.178Å、記録層10とし て用いられたCoCrPtBの格子間隔は4.178Å、記録層10とし て用いられたCoCrPtBの格子間隔は4.159Åである。前述の式(1)から、記録層10と第2下地層4との格子間隔のミスマッチム1、及び保磁力エンハンス層6と第2下地層4との格子間隔のミスマッチム2を求めると、ム1=0.550%、ム2=0.096%であり、ム1>ム2を満足している。一方、比較例の磁気記録媒体では、記録層及び保磁力エンハンス層はともに同組成のCoCrPtBであるために、ミスマッチム1=ム2=0.550%である。したがって、第2下地層であるCrMo上に保磁力エンハンス層を成膜する場合、CoPtを保磁力エンハンス層に用いた方が、CoCrPtBを用いた場合よりも、下地層と記録層との間の格子間隔のミスマッチを小さくできるので、記録層の 結晶性を向上させることができる。

[0044]

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ところで、図2のヒステリシスループにおいて、磁界が0になる前に磁化が急激に低下する領域では、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率(8M/8H)が極大となる点が現れている。この極大点が出現した後に更に磁界を低下させてゆき、磁化の変化率が安定化した後に再度外部磁界を増加させると、図4の斜線に示すようにヒステリシス曲線が得られる。このヒステリシス曲線をマイナーループと呼ぶ。ここで、マイナーループの上端と下端の中点にあるループの中心における磁界日は、記録層10と保磁力エンハンス層6の磁化の交換結合に比例する交換結合磁界日exとして知られている。この実施例で得られた磁気ディスクの場合、日exは約1.0k0eであることがわかった。一方、比較例の磁気ディスクの場合、マイナーループより求められた日exは、0.4k0eであることがわかった。したがって、本発明では、保磁力エンハンス層の磁性元素の割合を、記録層よりも増加させることにより、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との交換結合力が増大されている。

[0045]

つぎに、実施例1及び比較例で得られた磁気記録媒体について、磁気記録媒体の熱安定性の指標となる値 $Ku\cdot V/k_B\cdot T$ (Ku は記録層の結晶磁気異方性定数、V は活性化体積、 k_B はボルツマン定数、T は絶対温度を表す)を求めたところ、実施例1の磁気記録媒体では、約78であったのに対し、比較例の磁気記録媒体では約65であった。このことからも、本発明の磁気記録媒体は熱安定性に優れることがわかる。更に、実施例の磁気記録媒体では、面内磁気記録媒体の高密度記録の可能性を示す指標であるBrt は、約49.7 $G\mu$ mであった。

[0046]

つぎに、保磁力エンハンス層を種々の膜厚で形成した以外は、実施例1と同様のプロセスにより磁気記録媒体を製造して、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚の異なる複数の磁気記録媒体を得た。そして、それぞれの磁気記録媒体について上記と同様にVSMにより磁化曲線を観測して記録層の保磁力を求めた。図3に、保磁力エンハンス層であるCoPt層の膜厚と、記録層の保磁力の関係を示す。この結果からわかるように、CoPt膜の膜厚の増加に伴って記録層の保磁力も増大している。

[0047]

次いで、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚の異なるそれぞれの磁気記録媒体について、上記と同様の方法により交換結合磁界を測定し、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚に対する交換結合磁界の依存性を調べた。結果を図3のグラフに示す。このグラフからわかるように、保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚が増加するに伴って、交換結合磁界は減少している。図3から、保磁力エンハンス層をCoPt層で構成した場合、記録層の保磁力と交換結合磁界をともにバランス良く高めることが可能な保磁力エンハンス層の最適な膜厚は1.0nm~2.0nmであることがわかる。

[0048]

【実施例2】

実施例1と同様のプロセスにより複数枚の磁気ディスクを作製し、各ディスクの保護層上に潤滑剤を塗布した後、それらを磁気記録装置のスピンドルに同軸上に取り付けた。磁気記録装置の概略構成を図6及び図7に示す。図6は磁気記録装置の上面図であり、図7は、図6の破線A-A'における磁気記録装置60の断面図である。記録用磁気ヘッドとして、2.1Tの高飽和磁束密度を有するデュアルスピンバルブ型磁気へッドを用いた。記録用磁気ヘッド及び再生用磁気ヘッドは一体化されており、図6及び図7では磁気ヘッド53として示した。この一体型の磁気ヘッド53は磁気ヘッド用駆動系54により制御される。複数の磁気ディスク10は回転駆動系51のスピンドル52により同軸回転される。磁気記録装置の磁気ヘッド面と磁気ディスクとの距離は11nmに保った。この磁気ディスクに40Gbits/inch²(6.20Gbits/cm²)に相当する信号を記録して磁気ディスクのS/Nを評価したところ、25dBの再生出力が得られた。

[0049]

磁気記録装置60の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、24.3dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は3%であった。

[0050]

【比較例2】

比較例1の磁気ディスク50を実施例2と同様にして磁気記録装置に組み込んだ。この磁気記録装置の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、22.5dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は10%であった。従って、本発明の磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置は記録安定性に関して優れていることがわかる。

[0051]

以上、本発明を実施例により具体的に説明してきたが、本発明はそれらに限定されない。第1及び第2金属下地層、保磁力エンハンス層、磁気結合層及び記録層は、実施例で示した材料に限らず、種々の知られた材料で構成することができる。

[0052]

【発明の効果】

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、下地層と記録層との格子間隔のミスマッチを緩和するような格子間隔を有する保磁力エンハンス層により、記録層の結晶配向性が向上しているので、記録層の保磁力が増大されている。これにより記録層に微小な磁区を形成することができ、更なる高密度化を実現できる。更には、保磁力エンハンス層中の磁性元素の割合を記録層よりも増加させることにより、保磁力エンハンス層と記録層との間の交換結合力を増大させることができる。かかる磁気記録媒体は、熱安定性に優れ、且つ、高保磁力であるため、超高密度記録が可能である。したがって、本発明の磁気記録媒体を備える磁気記録装置は、記録安定性に優れ、例えば、40Gbits/inch²を超える高記録密度記録の実現を可能にする。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】

本発明に従う磁気ディスクの概略断面構造を示す図である。

【図2】

実施例1の磁気ディスクのヒステリシスループ(メジャーループ)を示すグラフである。

【図3】

保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚と記録層の保磁力との関係及び保磁力エンハンス層の膜厚と交換結合磁界の関係を示すグラフである。

【図4】

従来の磁気ディスクの断面構造の概略図である。

【図5】

図2におけるヒステリシスループのマイナーループを模式的に示したグラフである。

【図6】

本発明の実施例2に従う磁気記録装置の一例を上方から見た概略図である。

【図7】

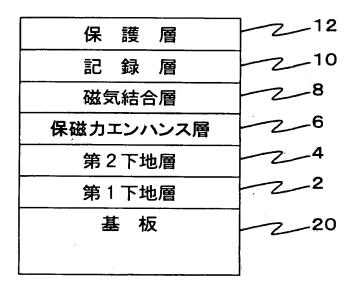
図6に示す磁気記録装置のA-A'方向の断面図である。

【符号の説明】

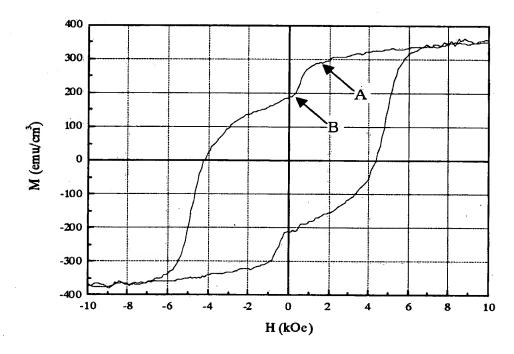
- 2 第1金属下地層
- 4 第2金属下地層
- 6 保磁力エンハンス層
- 8 磁気結合層
- 10 磁気ディスク
- 12 記録層
- 14 保護層
- 20 基板
- 52 スピンドル
- 53 磁気ヘッド
- 60 磁気記録装置

【書類名】 図面

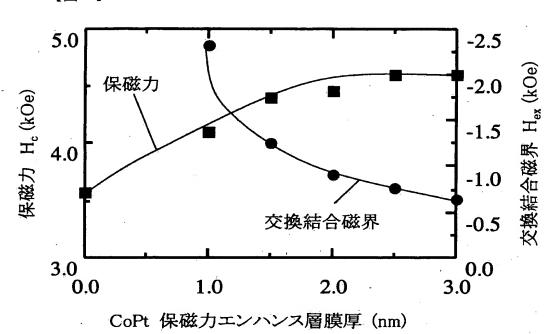
【図1】



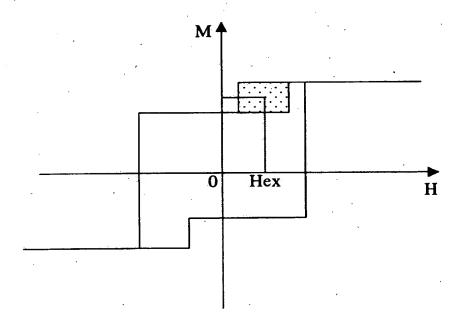
【図2】







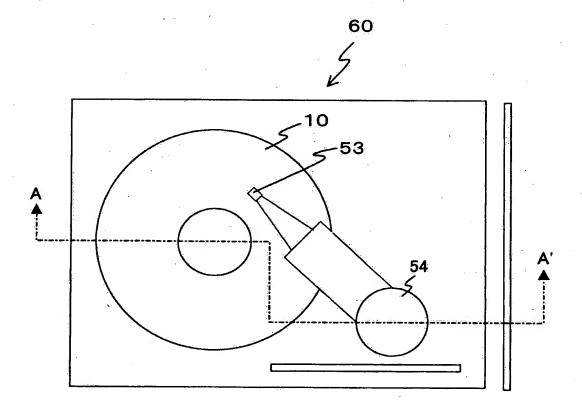
【図4】



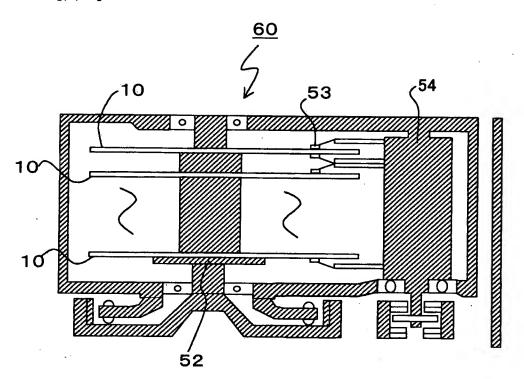
【図5】

保護層
磁気記録層
磁気結合層 (Ru)
磁化安定化層
下地層
基板

【図6】



【図7】



【書類名】 要約書

【要約】

【課題】 熱安定性に優れた高記録密度磁気記録媒体を提供する。

【解決手段】 面内磁気記録媒体10は、基板20上に、NiA1第1下地層2、CrMo第2下地層4、CoPt保磁力エンハンス層6、Ru磁気結合層8、CoCrPtB記録層12及びカーボン保護層14を備える。保磁力エンハンス層6と第2下地層4との格子間隔の差を、記録層12と第2下地層4との格子間隔の差よりも小さくする。これにより記録層12の結晶性は向上し、保磁力が増大する。更に、保磁力エンハンス層6を、記録層12よりも磁性元素濃度の高い材料を用いて形成する。これにより保磁力エンハンス層6と記録層12の交換結合力が増大する。磁気記録媒体の熱安定性に優れ、長期間に渡る記録安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置を提供することができる。

【選択図】 図1

出願人履歴情報

識別番号

[000005810]

1. 変更年月日 1990年 8月29日

[変更理由] 新規登録

住 所 大阪府茨木市丑寅1丁目1番88号

氏 名 日立マクセル株式会社

TRANSLATOR'S VERIFICATION

I hereby declare and state that I am knowledgeable of each of the Japanese and English languages and that I made and reviewed the attached translation of the certified copy of Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-078630, filed on March 19, 2001 from the Japanese language into the English language, and that I believe my attached translation to be accurate, true and correct to the best of my knowledge and ability.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of this application or any patent issued thereon.

Date:	February 3, 2004
	Kiyoto Ishi mura
	(Signature)
	Kiyoko Ishimura
	(Typed name)

JAPAN PATENT OFFICE

This is to certify that the annexed is a true copy of the following application as filed with this Office.

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Applicant(s):

HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

September 14, 2001 Commissioner, Japan Patent Office Kozo OIKAWA

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[Inventor]

[Address] c/o HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

[Name] Tetsunori KODA

[Inventor]

[Address] c/o HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

[Name] Hideaki YAMANAKA

[Inventor]

[Address] c/o HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

[Name] Nobuyuki INABA

[Inventor]

[Address] c/o HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

[Name] Enji FUJITA

```
[Inventor]
```

[Address]

c/o HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

[Name]

Satoshi MATSUNUMA

[Applicant]

[Identified Number]

000005810

[Name or Appellation]

HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

[Agent of the Applicant]

[Identified Number]

100099793

[Patent Attorney]

[Name or Appellation]

Kijuro KAWAKITA

[Telephone]

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Abstract

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[Reason for change] New Registration

Address 1-88, Ushitora 1-chome,

Ibaraki-shi, Osaka

Name HITACHI MAXELL, LTD.

[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Specification

[TITLE OF THE INVENTION] MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM AND MAGNETIC RECORDING APPARATUS

[CLAIMS]

[Claim 1] A magnetic recording medium characterized by comprising:

an underlying base layer;

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a coercive force enhancing layer which exists between the underlying base layer and the recording layer while making contact with the underlying base layer, which is formed of a ferromagnetic material, and which increases a coercive force of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer,

wherein a difference between lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the coercive force enhancing layer and lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the underlying base layer is smaller than a difference between lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the recording layer and the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the underlying base layer.

[Claim 2] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that the following relationship

is satisfied:

 $\Delta 1 > \Delta 2$

provided that the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the recording layer is defined as a_1 , the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the coercive force enhancing layer is defined as a_2 , the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the underlying base layer is defined as a_3 , and mismatches $\Delta 1$, $\Delta 2$ are defined as follows respectively:

$$\Delta 1 = |(a_1-a_3)/a_3| \times 100$$

$$\Delta 2 = |(a_2-a_3)/a_3| \times 100.$$

[Claim 3] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 2, characterized in that the mismatches $\Delta 1$, $\Delta 2$ further satisfy the following relationships:

$$\Delta 2 < \Delta 1 < 10.25$$
; and

$$(5/10.25) < \Delta 1/\Delta 2 < 1.$$

[Claim 4] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the coercive force enhancing layer has the same crystal structure as that of the recording layer.

[Claim 5] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that a ratio of magnetic element contained in the coercive force enhancing layer is larger than a ratio of magnetic element contained in the recording layer.

[Claim 6] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that a relationship of Ms1 > Ms2 is satisfied provided that saturation magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is represented by Ms1, and saturation magnetization of the recording layer is represented by Ms2.

[Claim 7] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the coercive force enhancing layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Co, Ni, Fe, and CoNiFe alloy.

[Claim 8] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the coercive force enhancing layer is formed of an alloy containing a transition metal and Co, Ni, or Fe.

[Claim 9] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that the non-magnetic layer is formed of Ru.

[Claim 10] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 9, characterized by further comprising a substrate, wherein the underlying base layer is provided on the substrate.

[Claim 11] A magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic

material;

a coercive force enhancing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which increases a coercive force of recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer.

[Claim 12] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11, characterized in that the coercive force enhancing layer also functions as a coercive force enhancing layer which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer.

[Claim 13] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11 or 12, characterized in that a magnetization curve of the magnetic recording medium with respect to an external magnetic field exhibits a hysteresis loop, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization is saturated, exists in a positive area of the external magnetic field, and an exchange coupling magnetic field, which is determined from the magnetization curve, is not less than 1 koe.

[Claim 14] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 11 to 13, characterized in that:

the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer include Co, Ni, or Fe; and

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a ratio of magnetic element contained in the coercive force enhancing layer is larger than a ratio of magnetic element contained in the recording layer.

[Claim 15] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 11, characterized in that the recording layer has a magnetization in the in-plane direction.

[Claim 16] A magnetic recording apparatus characterized by comprising:

the magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 11;

- a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and
- a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION]

[0001]

[TECHNICAL FIELD TO WHICH THE INVENTION BELONGS]

The present invention relates to a magnetic recording medium and a magnetic recording apparatus. In particular, the present invention relates to an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability and which is preferable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus which is installed with the in-plane magnetic recording medium.

[0002]

[PRIOR ART]

Accompanying with the recent progress of the advanced information society, the multimedia, with which not only the character information but also the voice and image information can be processed at a high speed, are popularized. A magnetic recording apparatus, which is installed to a computer or the like, is known as one of the multimedia. At present, the development is advanced in order that the magnetic recording apparatus is miniaturized while improving the recording density of such a magnetic recording apparatus.

[0003]

A typical magnetic recording apparatus includes a plurality of magnetic disks which are rotatably installed onto a spindle. Each of the magnetic disks comprises a substrate and a magnetic film formed thereon. Information is recorded by forming a magnetic domain having a specified magnetization direction in the magnetic film.

[0004]

In order to realize the high density recording with the magnetic recording apparatus as described above, it is demanded that the diameter of grains for constructing the magnetic film is made fine and minute and the interaction between the respective grains is lowered. However, a problem arises such that the thermal stability of the

grains is lowered if the grain diameter is made fine and minute and the interaction between the grains is lowered.

[0005]

Further, when a minute recording magnetic domain is formed in the magnetic layer by making the crystal grains in the magnetic layer fine and minute, a problem arises such that the antimagnetic field is increased since the spacing between the magnetic poles of the recording magnetic domain becomes short. Such antimagnetic field causes the inversion of magnetization of the recording magnetic domain formed in the magnetic layer. In order to reduce the effect of such antimagnetic field, it is necessary to decrease the film thickness of the magnetic layer. However, the decrease in film thickness of the magnetic layer results in the decrease in the coercive force thereof, a problem arises such that the magnetic recording domain becomes more unstable due to the thermal fluctuation and so on. Therefore, it is required to enhance the coercive force of the magnetic layer in order to realize high density recording with the magnetic recording medium.

[0006]

The known technique for improving the thermal stability of the magnetic disk includes a method in which a so-called keeper layer having soft magnetization is

provided as an underlying base layer for a recording layer, and a method in which a layer having magnetization in a direction opposite to that of magnetization of a recording layer is provided. As one of the latter method, a technique is disclosed in a literature of E. N. Abarra et al. (E. N. Abarra et al., TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR2000-34 (2000-10)) as shown in Fig. 5, in which the thermal stability is improved by forming an Ru thin film to effect a magnetic coupling between a recording layer of CoCrPtB and a magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB of a magnetic disk. The literature shows that in the structure of the magnetic disk shown in Fig. 5, when Ru is used as a magnetic coupling layer having a thickness of about 0.5 to 1 nm, the exchange coupling is effected in an antiferromagnetic manner between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. Therefore, in such a magnetic disk, the magnetizations of the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer are placed in an antiparallel manner from each other, and hence the magnetization of the recording layer is stabilized by the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the effective volume of inversion of magnetization is increased. Therefore, the magnetic disk is excellent in thermal stability.

[0007]

[PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION]

However, in order to realize further advanced high density recording with a magnetic recording apparatus, it is required to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is provided with a magnetic disk that is more excellent in thermal stability than the magnetic disk disclosed in the literature described above.

[8000]

A first object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium which is suitable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus provided with the same.

[0009]

A second object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium, especially an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability, and a magnetic recording apparatus provided with the same.

[0010]

A third object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium in which the coercive force of a recording layer is enhanced.

[0011]

[MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM]

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium characterized

by comprising:

an underlying base layer;

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a coercive force enhancing layer which exists between the underlying base layer and the recording layer while making contact with the underlying base layer, which is formed of a ferromagnetic material, and which increases a coercive force of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer,

wherein a difference between lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the coercive force enhancing layer and lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the underlying base layer is smaller than a difference between lattice spacing on an orientation plane of the recording layer and the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the underlying base layer.

[0012]

The magnetic recording medium of the present invention forms the coercive force enhancing layer which is formed of the ferromagnetic material and which is formed between the underlying base layer and the recording layer to make control so that the difference in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the underlying base

layer is smaller than the difference in lattice spacing between the recording layer and the underlying base layer. The coercive force enhancing layer as described above mitigates the lattice strain between the underlying base layer and the recording layer, and the crystalline orientation of the recording layer is improved thereby. Accordingly, it is possible to increase the coercive force of the recording layer. The magnetic recording medium as described above is formed of the ferromagnetic material in the same manner as the magnetization-stabilizing layer of the in-plane magnetic recording medium having the conventional type structure shown in Fig. 5. Therefore, it is possible to stabilize the magnetization of the recording That is, the coercive force enhancing layer has a function to stabilize the magnetization of the recording layer, in addition to a function as a seed layer to act so that the lattice strain between the underlying base layer and the recording layer, i.e., the discrepancy of lattice spacing is mitigated. Therefore, the high density recording can be put into practice by using the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, because the minute magnetic domain formed in the recording layer can be stably retained. In the present invention, the term "lattice spacing" means the lattice spacing on the orientation plane.

[0013]

In the magnetic recording medium according to the present invention, it is preferable that the relationship of $\Delta 1 > \Delta 2$ is satisfied provided that the lattice spacing on the orientation plane of the recording layer is defined as a_1 , the lattice spacing of the coercive force enhancing layer is defined as a_2 , the lattice spacing of the underlying base layer is defined as a_3 , and the mismatch $\Delta 1$ in lattice spacing between the recording layer and the underlying base layer and the mismatch $\Delta 2$ in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the underlying base layer are defined by the following expression:

 $\Delta i = |(a_i-a_3)/a_3| \times 100$ (i is 1 or 2) ...(1) provided that the symbol "||" indicates the absolute value in the expression (1). In general, the mismatch in lattice spacing results from the difference in lattice spacing at the interface between the respective layers of the stack obtained by growing and stacking a plurality of layers. The recording layer is grown from the top of the coercive force enhancing layer via the non-magnetic layer. Therefore, the orientation of the recording layer depends on the difference in lattice spacing between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer. On the other hand, the orientation of the coercive force enhancing layer

depends on the difference in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the underlying base layer. As described above, the mismatch $\Delta 2$ in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the underlying base layer is made smaller than the mismatch $\Delta 1$ in lattice spacing between the recording layer and the underlying base layer. Accordingly, it is possible to allow the coercive force enhancing layer to function as a seed layer for the recording layer, and it is possible to grow the recording layer from the underlying base layer in a desired orientation.

[0014]

In order to further enhance the lattice match between the underlying base layer and the recording layer, it is desirable to reduce the mismatch in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer and the mismatch in lattice spacing between the recording layer and the underlying base layer to be within 5 % respectively. For this purpose, it is preferable that the mismatches $\Delta 1$, $\Delta 2$ simultaneously satisfy the relationships of $\Delta 2 < \Delta 1 < 10.25$ and $(5/10.25) < \Delta 2/\Delta 1 < 1$. When the value of $\Delta 2/\Delta 1$ is within the range as described above, if any lattice strain exists between the underlying base layer and the recording layer, then the lattice strain can be effectively mitigated by the coercive force enhancing

layer. Thus, the recording layer having the desired lattice spacing can be formed from the top of the underlying base layer via the coercive force enhancing layer. Accordingly, it is possible to further increase the coercive force of the recording layer.

[0015]

In the present invention, it is ideal that the coercive force enhancing layer has the same crystal structure as that of the recording layer, because it is necessary to control and orient the easy axis of magnetization of the recording layer in the in-plane direction. In the case of the magnetic recording medium based on the in-plane recording system, when the exchange coupling is effected between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer, the magnetic anisotropy energy is lowest if the magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is parallel to the magnetization of the recording layer, and the stability of the magnetization is in the best state.

[0016]

It is desirable for the magnetic recording medium of the present invention that a relationship of Ms1 > Ms2 is satisfied provided that saturation magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is represented by Ms1, and saturation magnetization of the recording layer is

represented by Ms2. For this purpose, it is desirable that the coercive force enhancing layer is formed so that a ratio of magnetic element contained in the coercive force enhancing layer is larger than a ratio of magnetic element contained in the recording layer. Accordingly, it is possible to further increase the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer. In the case of the conventional type medium shown in Fig. 5, the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer are composed of the same material, in which the composition and the crystal structure are also the same. The recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer are subjected to exchange coupling via the Ru layer. It is considered that the exchange coupling is based on the fact that the electron orbits are coupled to one another for the Co atoms in the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer by the aid of the Ru atoms. In the present invention, the ratio of the magnetic element in the coercive force enhancing layer is made higher than the ratio of the magnetic element in the recording layer to increase the amount of magnetic element which contributes to the exchange coupling. Therefore, the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer is increased as compared with the exchange

coupling force between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer of the conventional type medium shown in Fig. 5. Accordingly, it is possible to improve the thermal stability as compared with the conventional type medium shown in Fig. 5.

[0017]

The coercive force enhancing layer may be formed of, for example, an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe.

Alternatively, the coercive force enhancing layer may be formed of an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe and a transition metal, especially a noble metal such as Pt, Au, Ag, Cu, and Pd. The element or the alloy as described above functions to electronically make coupling by the aid of the non-magnetic layer and increase the exchange coupling magnetic field.

[0018]

In the present invention, the coercive force of the recording layer and the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer can be controlled by adjusting the film thickness and the material to be used for the coercive force enhancing layer. As shown in Fig. 3, the following tendency exists. That is, when the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer is thick, the coercive force of the recording layer is increased. When the film thickness is thin, the

exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer is increased. Therefore, it is possible to appropriately select the film thickness depending on which characteristic has priority. According to experimental results having been obtained until now, it has been revealed that the exchange coupling between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer does not exhibit anti-ferromagnetic exchange coupling in some cases, if the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer exceeds 9.0 nm. On the other hand, it has been revealed that the lattice match between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer formed thereon is maintained, and it is possible to sufficiently increase the coercive force of the recording layer, if the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer is not less than 1.0 nm. Accordingly, in order to increase both of the coercive force of the recording layer and the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer in a well-balanced manner, it is preferable that the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer is 1.0 nm to 9.0 nm.

[0019]

In the magnetic recording media of the present invention, the non-magnetic layer may be formed of Ru. However, there is no limitation thereto. It is possible to

use a transition metal such as Rh, Ir, Hf, Cu, Cr, Ag, Au, Re, Mo, Nb, W, Ta, and V, and a non-magnetic alloy based on the CoCr system such as CoCrRu. Ru is preferred in order to further enhance the exchange coupling. In the present invention, the non-magnetic layer has a function to magnetically couple the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer. Therefore, the non-magnetic layer is also referred to as "magnetic coupling layer".

[0020]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the recording layer may be crystalline, and the crystalline phase may be composed of an alloy principally containing cobalt (Co). The Co alloy may contain Co as well as Cr, Pt, Ta, Nb, Ti, Si, B, P, Pd, V, Tb, Gd, Sm, Nd, Dy, Ho or Eu, or a combination thereof.

[0021]

When the recording layer contains chromium (Cr), it is possible to form a segregation portion of Cr at the grain boundary or in the vicinity of the grain boundary between the crystal grains (magnetic grains) principally containing Co. When the recording layer further contains Ta, Nb, Ti, B, P, or a combination of these elements, the segregation of Cr is facilitated. Owing to the segregation, it is possible to reduce the magnetic interaction between the magnetic grains, and it is possible to decrease the number

of magnetic grains for constructing the unit of inversion of magnetization. Therefore, it is possible to provide the magnetic recording medium which is strong against the thermal fluctuation regardless of the minute unit of inversion of magnetization, when the coercive force enhancing layer of the present invention is used in combination with the recording layer containing the foregoing additive in the CoCr alloy. In the recording layer as described above, the magnetic coupling between the crystal grains is broken by the Cr-rich non-magnetic area segregated at the grain boundary. Therefore, the noise, which would otherwise result from the recording transition area, can be also suppressed.

[0022]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the underlying base layer may be formed of, for example, Cr or Ni, or, Cr alloy or Ni alloy. The Cr alloy or the Ni alloy may contain Cr, Ti, Ta, V, Ru, W, Mo, Nb, Ni, Zr, or Al other than the base element. The underlying base layer is used in order to control the crystalline orientation and the lattice spacing of the recording layer. The underlying base layer may be also used as a single layer or a plurality of layers.

[0023]

The magnetic recording medium of the present invention

may further comprise a substrate. In this arrangement, the underlying base layer is formed on the substrate. The substrate may be formed of glass or plastic such as polycarbonate.

[0024]

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a coercive force enhancing layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which increases a coercive force of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer.

[0025]

In the magnetic recording medium according to the second aspect of the present invention, the coercive force of the recording layer can be increased owing to the coercive force enhancing layer as compared with a case in which the recording layer is formed as a single layer.

Accordingly, information can be recorded at a high density on the recording layer. Further, the thermal stability of recorded information is excellent. Further, the exchange coupling force is exerted between the coercive force

enhancing layer and the recording layer via the nonmagnetic layer, because the coercive force enhancing layer is formed of the ferromagnetic material. Therefore, the coercive force enhancing layer also functions to stabilize the magnetization of the recording layer. In order to increase the coercive force of the recording layer, it is desirable to reduce the mismatch in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer. In order to reduce the mismatch in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer, for example, the underlying base layer may be provided. The underlying base layer is positioned in the medium such that the coercive force enhancing layer is positioned between the underlying base layer and the recording layer. Here, it is desirable that the underlying base layer controls the orientation of the recording layer and has a structure similar to the crystal structure of the recording layer with which a high coercive force can be obtained. order to increase the coercive force of the recording layer, the crystal grain diameter of the coercive force enhancing layer may be controlled.

[0026]

The magnetic recording medium as described above has a magnetic characteristic which is represented by a hysteresis loop as depicted by a magnetization curve as

shown in Fig. 4. In the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, exists in an area of positive magnetic field. When the magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, both of the magnetizations of the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer are parallel. The magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is inverted due to the exchange coupling force exerted between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer in the area in which the rate of change of magnetization exhibits the local maximum as the external magnetic field is lowered. In the residual magnetization state, the thermal stability of the magnetization of the recording layer is improved owing to the exchange coupling force as described above. Further, a minor hysteresis loop as shown in Fig. 4 may be observed in the area in which the rate of change of magnetization is locally maximized. The exchange coupling magnetic field Hex, which is determined from the central point of the minor hysteresis loop, is increased in accordance with the increase of the exchange coupling force between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer. Therefore, it is indicated that the

larger the exchange coupling magnetic field is, the larger the thermal stability is. The exchange coupling magnetic field $H_{\rm ex}$ is not less than 1 kOe, preferably not less than 1.5 kOe, which is remarkably larger than that of the conventional type magnetic recording medium shown in Fig. 5. Therefore, it is appreciated that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability.

[0027]

In order to generate the large exchange coupling magnetic field $H_{\rm ex}$, for example, it is desirable that the coercive force enhancing layer is formed so that the ratio of the magnetic element contained in the coercive force enhancing layer is larger than the ratio of the magnetic element contained in the recording layer.

[0028]

According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording apparatus comprising:

the magnetic recording medium according to the first or the second aspect of the present invention;

a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and

a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[0029]

The magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time, because the magnetic recording apparatus is installed with the magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability.

[0030]

[EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION]

The magnetic recording medium and the magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention will be specifically explained below in accordance with embodiments and Comparative Examples. However, the present invention is not limited to the embodiments.

[0031]

[FIRST EMBODIMENT]

Fig. 1 shows a sectional view of a typical embodiment of the magnetic recording medium according to the present invention. A magnetic recording medium comprises, on a glass substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2, a second underlying base layer 4, a coercive force enhancing layer 6, a magnetic coupling layer 8, a recording layer 12, and a protective layer 14. The respective layers were formed as follows by means of sputtering by using a DC magnetron sputtering apparatus.

[0032]

An NiAl film was formed as the first metal underlying base layer 2 on the glass substrate 20 having a diameter of 2.5 inches (6.25 cm) by means of sputtering by using the DC magnetron sputtering apparatus. An NiAl alloy having an atomic ratio of Ni:Al = 50:50 was used for a target. The NiAl film had a film thickness of 50 nm. The Ar gas pressure during the sputtering was 0.3 Pa, and the introduced electric power was 0.5 kW. The substrate was heated to 340 °C after the pressure of the sputtering chamber was reduced to be not more than 1×10^{-5} Pa before starting the sputtering. The speed of film formation was about 3 nm/second under this condition.

[0033]

A CrMo film was formed as the second metal underlying base layer 4 to have a film thickness of 20 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 2. A CrMo alloy containing Mo by 27 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0034]

A CoPt film was formed as the coercive force enhancing layer 6 to have a film thickness of 2 nm on the second metal underlying base layer 4. A CoPt alloy containing Pt by 17 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal

underlying base layer 2.

[0035]

Subsequently, an Ru film was formed as the magnetic coupling layer 8 to have a film thickness of 0.8 nm on the coercive force enhancing layer 6. Ru was used for a target. The film formation condition during the sputtering was the same as that for the first enhancing layer 8.

[0036]

A CoCrPtB film having magnetization in the in-plane direction was formed as the recording layer 10 to have a film thickness of 18 nm on the magnetic coupling layer 8. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the coercive force enhancing layer 6.

[0037]

Finally, a carbon layer was formed as a protective film to have a film thickness of 5 nm on the CoCrPtB recording layer 12. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2. Thus, the magnetic disk 10 having the structure shown in Fig. 1 was produced.

[0038]

[COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE 1]

As Comparative Example, a CoCrPtB film having the same composition as that of the recording layer 10 was formed in

place of the coercive force enhancing layer 6. The coercive force enhancing laye had a film thickness of 4.5 nm, and the recording layer had a film thickness of 18 nm, in the same manner of the recording layer of the first embodiment.

[0039]

[EVALUATION OF MAGNETIZATION CURVE]

The magnetization was measured as follows for the magnetic disk manufactured in the first embodiment. magnetic field was applied with VSM (Vibration Sample Magnetometer) to observe the magnetization curve with respect to the external magnetic field. An obtained result is shown in Fig. 2. As appreciated from a hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2, an area exists, in which the magnetization is suddenly lowered at a certain magnetic field before the external magnetic field is zero when the external magnetic field is lowered after the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetization. This phenomenon is caused by the influence of the exchange coupling exerted between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer. phenomenon appears as follows. That is, when the magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, the magnetization of the recording layer is parallel to the magnetization of the coercive force

enhancing layer. However, when the external magnetic field is lowered, then the magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is inverted to be antiparallel to the direction of magnetization of the recording layer, thereby causing this phenomenon.

[0040]

The coercive force of the recording layer was determined from the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2. The way of determining the coercive force will be explained The hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2 is the hysteresis loop of the magnetic recording medium. value of magnetization on the hysteresis loop indicates the sum of magnetizations of the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer constructed with the magnetic materials respectively. On the other hand, the coercive force of the recording layer is usually defined by the magnitude of the external magnetic field to be obtained when the magnitude of magnetization of the recording layer is zero in the hysteresis loop depicted by only the magnetization of the recording layer. Accordingly, the coercive force of the recording layer was estimated as follows from the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2. As for the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2, it is assumed that only the magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is detected when the magnetization of the recording

layer is zero. It is assumed that the magnitude of the magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer in this case is $M_{\rm sta}$. On this assumption, the magnitude of the external magnetic field, at which the magnetization of $-M_{\rm sta}$ is obtained in the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2, indicates the external magnetic field to be obtained when the magnetization of the recording layer is zero, i.e., the coercive force of the recording layer. $M_{\rm sta}$ can be estimated as follows from the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2.

[0041]

As described above, in the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2, the magnetization is suddenly decreased between Point A and Point B on the loop as shown in Fig. 2, when the external magnetic field is lowered after the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetization. The sudden decrease in magnetization between Point A and Point B is caused such that only the magnetization of the coercive force enhancing layer is inverted without any change of the direction of magnetization of the recording layer. The direction of the coercive force enhancing layer is parallel to that of the coercive force enhancing layer at Point A on the loop. The magnetization at Point A represents the sum of magnetizations of the recording layer and the coercive

force enhancing layer. On the other hand, the directions of magnetization of the respective layers are antiparallel at Point B. Accordingly, the magnetization at Point B represents the difference in magnetization between the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer. Therefore, the magnetization $M_{\rm sta}$ of the coercive force enhancing layer described above can be estimated as a half of the difference between the value of magnetization at Point A and the value of magnetization at Point B on the loop.

[0042]

The coercive force of the recording layer was determined from the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2 in accordance with the method as described above. As a result, the coercive force was about 4.5 kOe. On the other hand, the coercive force was determined in accordance with the same method for the recording layer of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example. As a result, the coercive force of the recording layer was about 3.5 kOe. That is, the coercive force of the recording layer of the magnetic disk of this embodiment was increased by about 30 % as compared with the recording layer of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example.

[0043]

The relation of orientation between the second

underlying base layer 4 and the recording layer 10 resides in CrMo(211)[110]//CoCrPtB(10.0)[0001]. The lattice spacing of CrMo[110] as the second underlying base layer 4 is 4.182 angstroms, the lattice spacing of [0001] of CoPt used as the coercive force enhancing layer 6 in this embodiment is 4.178 angstroms, and the lattice spacing of CoCrPtB used as the recording layer 10 is 4.159 angstroms. When the mismatch $\Delta 1$ in lattice spacing between the recording layer 10 and the second underlying base layer 4, and the mismatch $\Delta 2$ in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer 6 and the second underlying base layer 4 are determined from the expression (1) described above, there are given $\Delta 1$ = 0.550 % and $\Delta 2$ = 0.096 %, in which $\Delta 1 > \Delta 2$ is satisfied. On the other hand, in the case of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example, both of the recording layer and the coercive force enhancing layer are composed of CoCrPtB having the same composition, in which there is given for the mismatch $\Delta 1 = \Delta 2 = 0.550$ %. Therefore, when the coercive force enhancing layer is formed as the film on CrMo as the second underlying base layer, the mismatch in lattice spacing between the underlying base layer and the recording layer can be decreased when CoPt is used for the coercive force enhancing layer as compared with the case in which CoCrPtB is used. Therefore, it is possible to improve the

crystallinity of the recording layer.

[0044]

In the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2, in the area in which the magnetization is suddenly lowered before the magnetic field is zero, a point appears, at which the rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field ($\delta M/\delta H$) is locally maximized. When the magnetic field is lowered after the appearance of the local maximum point, and the external magnetic field is increased again after the rate of change of the magnetization is stabilized, then a hysteresis curve is obtained as depicted with hatched area in Fig. 4. The hysteresis curve is called "minor loop". The magnetic field H, which is located at the center of the loop disposed at the midpoint between the upper end and the lower end of the minor loop, is known as the exchange coupling magnetic field Hex which is proportional to the exchange coupling between the recording layer 10 and the coercive force enhancing layer In the case of the magnetic disk obtained in this embodiment, it has been revealed that Hex is about 1.0 kOe. On the other hand, in the case of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example, it has been revealed that Hex determined from a minor loop is 0.4 kOe. Therefore, in the present invention, the exchange coupling force between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer is

increased by increasing the ratio of the magnetic element in the coercive force enhancing layer as compared with the recording layer.

[0045]

Next, as for the magnetic disks of the first embodiment of the present invention and Comparative Example, the value $\text{Ku} \bullet \text{V}/k_\text{B} \bullet \text{T}$ (Ku represents the crystalline magnetic anisotropy constant of the recording layer, V represents the volume of activation, k_{B} represents the Boltzmann's constant, and T represents the absolute temperature) was determined as the index for the thermal stability of the magnetic disk. As a result, the value was about 78 in the case of the magnetic disk of the first embodiment of the present invention. On the other hand, the value was about 65 in the case of the magnetic recording medium of Comparative Example. Also according to this fact, it is understood that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability. Further, in the case of the magnetic disk of the embodiment of the present invention, Brt as the index to exhibit the possibility of high density recording on the in-plane magnetic recording medium was about 49.7 Gµm.

[0046]

Next, magnetic disks were produced in accordance with the same process as that of the first embodiment except

that coercive force enhancing layers were formed with various film thicknesses to obtain a plurality of magnetic disks having different film thicknesses of the coercive force enhancing layers. The magnetization curve was observed to determine the coercive force of the recording layer by means of VSM in the same manner as described above for each of the magnetic disks. Fig. 3 shows a relationship between the film thickness of the CoPt layer as the coercive force enhancing layer and the coercive force of the recording layer. As appreciated from this result, the coercive force of the recording layer is increased as the film thickness of the CoPt film is increased.

[0047]

Subsequently, the exchange coupling magnetic field was determined in accordance with the same method as described above to determine the dependency of the exchange coupling magnetic field with respect to the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer for the respective magnetic disks in which the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer differed. An obtained result is shown in a graph in Fig. 3. As understood from this graph, the exchange coupling magnetic field is decreased, as the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer is increased. According to Fig. 3, it is understood that when

the coercive force enhancing layer is formed of the CoPt layer, the optimum film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer, which makes it possible to increase both of the exchange coupling magnetic field and the coercive force of the recording layer in a well-balanced manner, is 1.0 nm to 2.0 nm.

[0048]

[SECOND EMBODIMENT]

A plurality of magnetic disks were produced in accordance with the same process as that used in the first embodiment. A lubricant was applied onto the protective layers of the respective disks, and then the disks were coaxially attached to a spindle of a magnetic recording apparatus. A schematic arrangement of the magnetic recording apparatus is shown in Figs. 6 and 7. Fig. 6 shows a top view of the magnetic recording apparatus, and Fig. 7 shows a cross-sectional view of the magnetic recording apparatus 60 taken along a broken line A-A' shown in Fig. 6. A dual spin bulb-type magnetic head, which has a high saturation magnetic flux density of 2.1 T, was used as a recording magnetic head. The recording magnetic head and the reproducing magnetic head were integrated into one unit, and they are indicated as a magnetic head 53 in Figs. 6 and 7. The integrated type magnetic head 53 is controlled by a magnetic head-driving system 54.

plurality of magnetic disks 10 are coaxially rotated by the spindle 52 of a rotary driving system 51. The distance between the magnetic disk and the magnetic head surface of the magnetic recording apparatus was maintained to be 11 nm. A signal corresponding to 40 Gbits/inch² (6.20 Gbits/cm²) was recorded on the magnetic disk to evaluate S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 25 dB was obtained.

[0049]

In order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus 60, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 24.3 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 3 %.

[0050]

[COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE 2]

The magnetic disk 50 of Comparative Example 1 was incorporated into the magnetic recording apparatus in the same manner as in the second embodiment. In order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed

in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 22.5 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 10 %. Therefore, it is appreciated that the magnetic recording apparatus provided with the magnetic disk of the present invention is excellent in recording stability.

[0051]

In the foregoing, the present invention has been specifically explained with reference to the embodiments. However, the present invention is not limited thereto. The first metal underlying base layer, the second metal underlying base layer, the coercive force enhancing layer, the magnetic coupling layer and the recording layer may be constructed with a variety of known materials without being limited to the materials described in the embodiments.

[0052]

[EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the crystalline orientation of the recording layer is improved owing to the coercive force enhancing layer having the lattice spacing so that the mismatch in lattice spacing between the underlying base layer and the

recording layer is mitigated. Therefore, the coercive force of the recording layer is increased. Accordingly, minute magnetic domains can be formed in the recording layer, and it is possible to realize further advanced high density recording. Further, the exchange coupling force between the coercive force enhancing layer and the recording layer can be increased by increasing the ratio of the magnetic element in the coercive force enhancing layer as compared with the recording layer. The magnetic recording medium as described above is excellent in thermal stability, and it has the high coercive force. Therefore, it is possible to perform the super high density recording on the magnetic recording medium. Accordingly, the magnetic recording apparatus, which is provided with the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, is excellent in recording stability. It is possible to realize the super high density recording exceeding, for example, 40 Gbits/inch².

[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]

- [Fig. 1] Fig. 1 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a first embodiment.
- [Fig. 2] Fig. 2 shows a graph illustrating a hysteresis loop (major loop) of the magnetic disk according to the first embodiment.
 - [Fig. 3] Fig. 3 shows a graph illustrating a

relationship between a film thickness of a coercive force enhancing layer and a coercive force of a recording layer and a relationship between the film thickness of the coercive force enhancing layer and an exchange coupling magnetic field.

[Fig. 4] Fig. 4 shows a sectional view illustrating a structure of a conventional magnetic disk.

[Fig. 5] Fig. 5 schematically shows a minor loop of the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 2.

[Fig. 6] Fig. 6 shows a schematic arrangement of a magnetic recording apparatus according to a second embodiment of the present invention as viewed from a position thereover.

[Fig. 7] Fig. 7 shows a sectional view as viewed in a direction of A-A' illustrating the magnetic recording apparatus shown in Fig. 6.

[EXPLANATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS]

- 2 first metal underlying base layer
- 4 second metal underlying base layer
- 6 coercive force enhancing layer
- 8 magnetic coupling layer
- 10 magnetic disk
- 12 recording layer
- 14 protective layer
- 20 substrate

Patent Application No. 2001-078630

- 52 spindle
- 53 magnetic head
- 60 magnetic recording apparatus

[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Abstract

[ABSTRACT]

[PROBLEMS] To provide a magnetic recording medium for high-density recording which is excellent in thermal stability.

[MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS] An in-plane magnetic recording medium 10 has, on a substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2 of NiAl, a second underlying base layer 4 of CrMo, a coercive force enhancing layer 6 of CoPt, a magnetic coupling layer 8 of Ru, a recording layer 12 of CoCrPtB, and a protective layer 14 of carbon. difference in lattice spacing between the coercive force enhancing layer 6 and the second underlying base layer 4 is made to be smaller than the difference in lattice spacing between the recording layer 12 and the second underlying base layer 4, and the crystallinity of the recording layer 12 is improved thereby. Further, the coercive force enhancing layer 6 is formed by using a material which contains the magnetic element at a concentration which is greater than that of the recording layer 12, thereby enhancing the coupling force between the coercive force enhancing layer 6 and the recording layer 12. Accordingly, it is possible to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time in which the thermal stability of the

Patent Application No. 2001-078630

magnetic recording medium is excellent.

[SELECTED DRAWINGS] Fig. 1

Fig. 1

	_ `
PROTECTIVE LAYER	Z-12
RECORDING LAYER	2 10
MAGNETIC COUPLING LAYER	2_8
COERCIVE FORCE ENHANCING LAYER	2 6
SECOND UNDERLYING BASE LAYER	2-4
FIRST UNDERLYING BASE LAYER	2_2
SUBSTRATE	20
]

Fig. 2

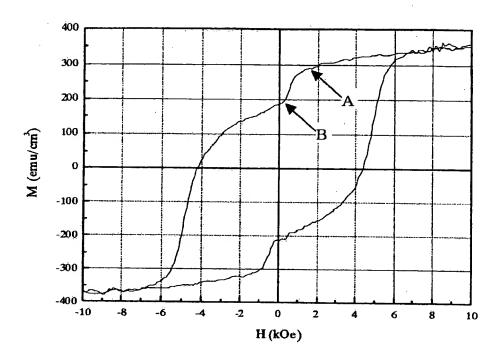
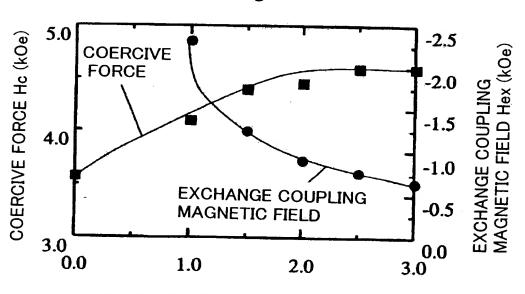


Fig. 3



FILM THICKNESS OF COERCIVE FORCE ENHANCING LAYER of CoPt (nm)

Fig. 4

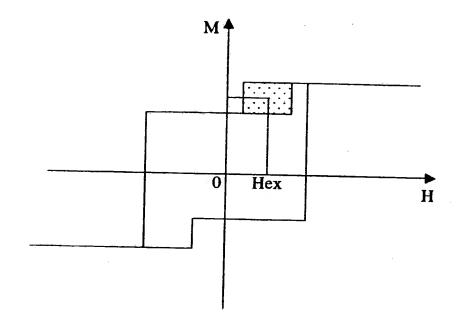


Fig. 5

PROTECTIVE LAYER

MAGNETIC RECORDING
LAYER

MAGNETIC COUPLING
LAYER (Ru)

MAGNETIZATION—
STABILIZING LAYER

UNDERLYING BASE LAYER

SUBSTRATE

Fig. 6

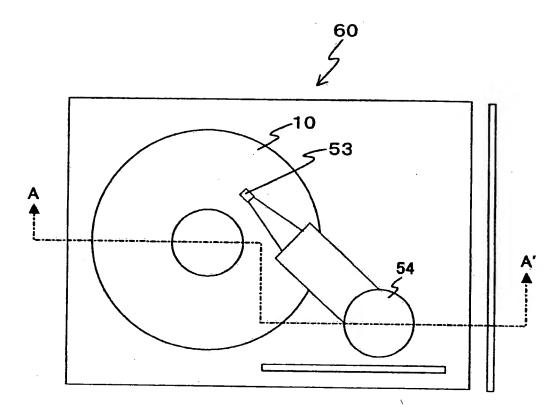


Fig. 7

